

**Town of Becket
Board of Selectmen's Meeting
November 18, 2015
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall
557 Main Street, Becket**

Attendees:

Board of Selectmen: Jeanne Pryor *Chairperson*; William Elovirta, Vice Chairperson;
Angela Hilton, *Clerk*

Board of Assessors: Elizabeth Will, Geri Walters

Staff: Ed Gibson, *Town Administrator*; Beverly Gilbert, *Recording Secretary*;

Others: Jeff Reynolds and Harald Scheid from Regional Resource Group,
Colleen O'Connor, and Donald Murray

Call to Order

Jeanne called the meeting to order at 7 PM. She stated that the meeting is being held in accordance with the Open Meeting Law and Guidelines for the Becket Board of Selectmen Meetings.

Jeanne asked if anyone was recording the meeting. The Board of Selectmen was recording the meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Chair led those attending in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Angie moved to approve the 11/4/15 minutes. Bill seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Update on Highway Department's Equipment Operator, and Town Mechanic Recruitments

Ed reported that two individuals accepted Ed and Chris Bouchard's offer of employment for the Equipment Operator and Town Mechanic positions. Ed advised that employment with the town is contingent upon favorable results of physicals, and drug & alcohol tests. Because Chris is eager to bring these individuals aboard, it is anticipated and hoped that at the next meeting, Ed will present the pay rate for the BOS to approve retroactively.

Board of Assessors Tax Classification Hearing

At 7:05 p.m. Jeanne opened the Board of Assessors Tax Classification Hearing to determine the allocation of property tax levy among the four classes of real estate and personal property for Fiscal Year 2016. The Board of Assessors (Liz Will and Geri Walters) along with Jeff Reynolds and Harald Scheid from Regional Resource Group presented and fielded questions. Harald stated that "Municipalities with a large commercial/industrial tax base often see fit to shift the tax burden to help maintain lower residential taxes. Given Becket's small commercial and industrial base, it would take a large shift of the tax burden from the residential class to the commercial and industrial class to yield a modest residential tax reduction." Based on this, the Board of Assessors recommended that the BOS adopt a single tax rate to be applied to all classes of property in

Becket. Bill moved to close the hearing, seconded by Angie. Motion carried unanimously. At 7:24 p.m., Jeanne closed the hearing. Bill moved for the BOS to vote in accordance with M.G.L., chapter 40, Section 56, as amended, the percentage of local tax levy which will be borne by each class of real and personal property, relative to setting the Fiscal Year 2016 tax rates and set the Residential Factor at 1.0, with a corresponding CIP shift of 1.0, pending approval of the town's annual tax recap (rate of \$10.55) by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Angie seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

During discussion it was noted that because effective 7/1/2016 DOR will no longer provide CAMA support, the town will arrange for alternative CAMA support and such will be part of the FY2017 budget (between \$2,500 and \$3,000).

Monthly Report(s):

The BOS reviewed the October 2015 reports of the Fire Department, Police Department and Animal Control Officer.

Berkshire County Education Task Force Update – Town Administrator

Ed provided an update on the Berkshire County Education Task Force which commenced last July. He gave the BOS an information packet containing: Frequently Asked Questions, Why is the work of the Berkshire County Education Task Force important, 10/31/2015 Meeting Minutes, Berkshire County Education Task Force White Paper (mission statement), and a spreadsheet listing the districts responses to the inventory survey (almost all 18 districts/towns have submitted their surveys). Ed pointed out that the task force serves in an advisory capacity with no legal authority to impose its recommendations on the school districts and municipalities. The Berkshire County Educational Task Force is developing short term and long term recommendations as to how to save money (perhaps by sharing services such as special education, nursing, information technology, and strategically housing school buildings/property). The task force hopes to present suggestions for district/municipalities to consider adopting for FY17. He has observed that approximately 90% of members attend meetings.

Ed stated that he was inspired to participate on the task force because he believes it is critical for the region's economic health to sustain growth and encourage businesses to remain. In order to accomplish this, our youth must receive quality and affordable education to prepare for the workforce. Because of declining populations within the Berkshires, it is important for towns and regions in the Berkshires to analyze and develop a plan as to how we may work together to use our school related resources. What distinguishes the task force is that the state is providing some funding and it involves representation from all schools/districts throughout Berkshire County.

The task force is seeking funding for a Request for Proposal for a consulting firm to organize, analyze & process the inventory and financial records gathered, and to prepare a report containing recommendations. It is estimated that the cost will be approximately \$81,000. To date, approximately \$25,000 toward this cost is anticipated. Berkshire Bank has committed \$10,000. The committee has asked Senator Downing and Representative Pignatelli to advocate for funds in the Governor's Administration and Finance Office. So far twelve of the school committees have replied favorably to the task force's request for a \$500 contribution. Although awaiting a response from some districts/municipalities, a few have specified they will wait to hear some of the recommendations because they do not wish to contribute if the task force suggests that they close their school. Ed indicated that a school district's contribution of \$500 may create a greater sense of investment toward the task force's success.

Board of Selectmen's Comments and Announcements

To follow up on a meeting he attended last spring (5/18/15), Bill indicated that he has run into a dead end contacting the owner of the Johnson Rd. cell tower to ask for permission to mount a communications repeater to enhance radio communications between the Berkshire County Sheriff's Communication Center and Becket and surrounding towns. Ed will track down the owner's telephone number.

Town Administrator's report

MBI Broadband: the current status of the Broadband signups for Becket as of 11/18/15 is we are 86% of the way to our signup goal: 94 more locations to go to reach our goals of a required 40% take rate.

Fire Station #1 Memorial Service – There will be a memorial service for a former Volunteer Firefighter (organized by family) at Fire Station 1 this Sunday, 11/22.

Free Cash: Our Free Cash has been certified by the Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services as of July 1, 2015 in the amount of \$213,965 and the Free Cash for the Ambulance Enterprise Fund has been certified in the amount of \$4,379.

Meetings: Ed will attend the 7 Town Advisory School Meeting on 11/20/15 at Nessacus Middle School in Dalton.

Open Meeting Law review at the Legislature vote today. Today the State House approved an updated version of the Public Records Law. The MMA was not sure if the Senate would approve it today which happens to be the date the Legislature concludes formal sessions for the year. Jeanne stated that she e-mailed Smitty Pignatelli & Ben Downing to express her concerns about the proposed revisions including the requirement for cities, town and state agencies to appoint at least one records access officer to assist with all public records requests to facilitate compliance, to report to the state annually and to publicize the public records request process. Ed reported that MMA said they were very happy with some of the things left out of the original revision but they remain concerned about some of the unfunded mandates. The BOS and Town Administrator expressed frustration with unfunded mandates and stated it is hoped that the members of the Legislature will not push the bill through in haste merely to add to their list of their accomplishments to show their constituents.

Public Input

None

Any other business to come before the Board

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission (ABCC) sent a survey pertaining to eLicensing. The ABCC is developing an eLicensing system and wanted to convey 1) Local Boards will maintain control of renewing the licenses, 2) Local Boards will continue collecting license fees outside of the system, and 3) If possible, licensees may be able to upload the Local Board's required documents for renewal. Ed and the Selectmen favor eLicensing which comes with the advantage of electronic records. The Selectmen discussed and provided answers to ABCC's survey, with the inclusion of a comment that the BOS needs copies of ABCC's communication to

licensees. Should eLicensing become a reality, applicants would be welcome to file their applications in the Town Hall if they do not own a computer or if assistance is needed.

The Board scheduled a working meeting for 3:30 p.m. on 11/23 to discuss adopting policies:

- 1) Town Acceptance of a Private Road as a Public Way
- 2) Remote Meeting Participation

Jeanne moved to approve the Transfer Station Attendant hourly rate at \$17.47, seconded by Angie. Motion carried unanimously.

Review Correspondence

- Central Berkshire Regional School District re: Seven Town Advisory Committee Meeting 19th November

Board of Selectmen intends to go into Executive Session under MGL c. 30A, section 21 (a) (3) to discuss:

- **Litigation strategy and potential vote with respect to litigation Crystal Pond Homeowners Association vs. Town of Becket if an open meeting may have a detrimental impact of the public body on the litigating position on the town.**

Approval of Executive Session Minutes from 10/7/2015, 8/15/2014, 7/16/2014 & 4/2/2014

Bill moved to enter into Executive Session under MGL c. 30A, section 21 (a) (3) to discuss:

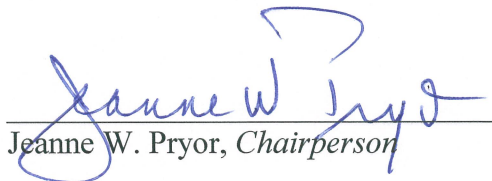
- Litigation strategy and potential vote with respect to litigation Crystal Pond Homeowners Association vs. Town of Becket if an open meeting may have a detrimental impact of the public body on the litigating position on the town.
- Approval of Executive Session Minutes from 10/7/2015, 8/15/2014, 7/16/2014 & 4/2/2014 and that the Board will not re-enter regular session meeting at the conclusion of the Executive Session. Angie seconded. Roll call vote: Bill voted yes, Angela voted yes, and Jeanne voted yes.

Ending of Regular Session Meeting:

At 8:24 PM the Board entered Executive Session.

Reviewed Payroll/Expense Warrants.

Respectfully submitted,
Beverly Gilbert, Secretary


Jeanne W. Pryor, Chairperson

Documents discussed at this meeting:

Town Administrator's Report
Berkshire County Education Task Force Packet
October Monthly Reports: Dog Officer, Fire Dept. & Police Department
ABCC E-mail/survey dated 11/13/2015
MMA email dated 11/17/2015 re: House to Debate Revised Public Records Bill